### In Transition

**Students and parents reflect on the impact of Missouri transgender legislation**

**Content warning: Suicide, self-harm and trauma**

**STORY BY ELLA BRAIG, ELLA BENDER & KATIE MYCKATYN**

**UG. 28, 2023, two laws addressing the treatment of transgender individuals went into effect in Missouri. One limits the participation of transgender minors in sports. The other bans them from receiving gender-affirming health care before the age of 18. Senate Bill 39 forbids both private and public schools from allowing transgender individuals to participate in sports that don’t align with their sex assigned at birth. Any school that violates this act could lose state funding. Senate Bill 49, called the Missouri Save Adolescents from Experiential Malpractice Act, forbids both private and public schools from allowing transgender individuals from receiving gender-affirming health care, didn’t fully explain the side effects of hormone replacement therapy to treatment prior to and informed consent. Multiple former patients of the Washington University Transgender Center have since denied that this malpractice occurred. They claimed to have had multiple appointments before being provided with gender-affirming care, said that they had been informed of the side effects of hormone replacement therapy and had given full

### Student Response

Amelia Rossi (12) started hormone replacement therapy just weeks before the enactment of Senate Bill 49. She was supplied puberty blockers through the Washington University Transgender Center, but the clinic was shut down before she could build up to a full dose of estrogen.

“For a couple months, I was on an extremely small dose of estrogen and I was a wreck because when your hormones are that out of whack for that long of a time, life does not go okay,” Rossi said. “I’ve transferred to Planned Parenthood in Fairview [Heights, Illinois] and now I’m on full dose of hormone replacement therapy.”

Like Rossi, student Tyler Sulivan* began hormone replacement therapy prior to the passage of Senate Bill 49. Since the bill’s enactment, his clinic has been shut down. He now has to travel four hours to receive care.

“These laws are not about protecting Missouri youth,” Sullivan said. “They’re just to have a sensationalized, hot topic that people can pin themselves to. There’s real consequences because these lawmakers don’t actually know transgender kids. They don’t actually know the consequences of the things that they’re doing.”

Oftentimes, people attempt to show their alliance towards the transgender community by conducting research on the politics of the issue. However, Rossi feels most supported when she is spoken to directly about the transgender experience.

“The biggest thing [people can do] is to talk to trans people and have trans people in [their] life,” Rossi said. “The only real way to sympathize with the experience is to have a personal relationship with someone like that in your life.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 35% of transgender youth attempt suicide during their teenage years, making them five times more likely to attempt suicide than their cisgender peers. In a study conducted by Diana Tordoff Ph.D., it was found that gender-affirming care results in a 73% reduction in self-harm and suicidal thoughts over a 12 month period.

“I faced a lot of really bad anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation [before my transition],” Rossi said. “That was ongoing for years. With [Senate Bill 49] restricting other people the resources that I have the privilege of accessing, this bill is going to kill kids.”

As stated by the National Institute of Health, the intention of gender-affirming care is to relieve symptoms of gender dysphoria, a state of severe distress caused by one’s gender identity not matching their sex assigned at birth. As a transgender man, student Henry Cook* has firsthand experience dealing with dysphoria.

“[Have] you ever been in a situation where you are wearing clothes that are really tight fitting and you can’t take them off?” Cook said. “That’s what dysphoria feels like. Being able to get [gender-affirming care] is like being able to take off those clothes and getting to wear normal clothes.”

Senate Bill 39 and Senate Bill 49 are not the first pieces of legislation to impact transgender individuals. On a national scale, the Pupil Privacy Rights Amendment prohibits educational facilities from asking for student personal information. Under this law, the Ladue School District, along with many others, is disallowed from inquiring about student pronouns.

“We’re just asking for basic human respect,” student Samuel Perry* said. “Treating, like any other individual [and use] our correct pronouns. What we do genuinely does not affect you.”

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**Tracking Transgender Milestones**

**A timeline of transgender history in the U.S.**

**Sept. 24, 1952**

Christine Jorgensen becomes the first American to complete sex-reassignment surgery

**Aug. 16, 1977**

New York Supreme Court rules in favor of Renee Richards, allowing her to play pro tennis

**Aug. 1, 1993**

Minnesota becomes the first state to ban anti-transgender discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations

**Sept. 29, 2005**

California law bans insurance companies from discriminating against transgender individuals

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* Indicates a false name to protect the identity of an anonymous student

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**By the Numbers**

**In 2023**

- 52% of transgender youth found school to be gender-affirming
- 35% of transgender youth found home to be gender-affirming
- 64% of transgender youth felt discriminated against due to their gender identity

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**Scan for more information on the Trevor Project**

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**Sources:**


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**within the chamber**

The Missouri State Senate passed Senate Bill 49 by a vote of 24-8.

**Source:** Missouri Legislative Scorecard

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**scan for senate bill 49**

**Source:** Missouri Legislative Scorecard

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**spread design by Katie Myckatyn**

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**Subjects:** Suicide, self-harm and trauma
Parent Response

In 2019, Rabbi Daniel Bogard traveled to Jefferson City, Missour to protest against Senate Bill 39. As the father of a transgender child, Bogard was motivated by a desire to grant his son the same opportunities as his cisgender peers.

“There were literally more bills last year trying to ban transgender kids from participating in youth athletics than there are transgender kids in Missouri high schools who have asked to participate in Missouri athletics,” Bogard said. “There is no real controversy. It is entirely being done by the Republican legislature in bad faith as a political bludgeon. They believe that getting people to be scared of my kid and disgusted by my kid is a winning political issue for them.

Since the passing of Senate Bill 39 and Senate Bill 49, David Williams, Rossi’s father, has feared for his daughter’s continued resi-
dency in Missouri.

“[Amelia] is actively looking for college options outside the United States,” Williams said. “And then if international really is not on the table, [she’ll choose] schools and states that are more welcoming than Missouri. Missou-
ri seems to be going out of its way to be the biggest and the loudest on the anti-transgender legis-
lation.”

It’s a common misconception that transgender individuals only resonate with the label due to an underlying mental illness. How-


Indeed, according to the University of Washington School of Public Health, transgender individuals who have received gender-affirm-
ing care are 60% less likely to de-
velop depression or other mental health conditions.

Like many trans-
gender children from an accepting household, Bog-


ard’s son doesn’t have a history of depression or mental illness. “[My son] is not a kid [who is] suffering in any way, or [a] con-
fused or sick kid,” Bogard said. “He’s like any other kid. The ob-


session of our government believ-
ing that they should know what his genitals look like and be able to sort him into categories based on what they imagine his genitals look like is disgusting.”

Despite the low regret rate of people who have transitioned, one of the primary arguments against granting minors access to gen-


er-defining healthcare is that they will feel guilt-ridden about their transition later in their adult life. Nonetheless, many individ-


uals who transitioned past the age of 18 claim that they regret delaying their transition.

“[Transgender people] can’t make the same decisions [to post-


pone puberty] at 22,” Bogard said. “When you talk to adult trans peo-


ple who were not given access to puberty blockers and hormones, they often have extreme trauma.”

While Senate Bill 39 and Sen-


ate Bill 49 were in the process of passing, Bogard once again trav-

elled to Jefferson City, Missouri to fight against the restrictions. Though many Missouri families with transgender minors have resolved to flee the state, Bogard is intent on staying and advocating for his son.

“There’s no way to truly make transgender people go away be-


cause it’s just another way of be-


ing human,” Bogard said. “No matter how hard our legislature tries to wipe transgender kids and transgender adults out of exis-

tence in our state, there are always transgender people being born every day. It’s a really beautiful, profound way of being a human being.”

Legislation on the Map

U.S. state policies on transgender health

Source: Human Rights Campaign Foundation, NPF, Movement Advancement Project, PPL, Williams Institute

**Current Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2024 Current Status</th>
<th>2023 Current Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporarily blocked in part</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>No explicit ban on accessing healthcare</td>
<td>No explicit ban on accessing healthcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Ban makes gender-affirming care a felony crime</td>
<td>Ban makes gender-affirming care a felony crime</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Permanently blocked</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Ban makes gender-affirming care a felony crime</td>
<td>Ban makes gender-affirming care a felony crime</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**No explicit ban on accessing healthcare**
- State A
- State B
- State C

**Ban makes gender-affirming care a felony crime**
- State D
- State E

**Flowchart**

- **Flowchart**
- **Flowchart**

**Key**
- **Flowchart**
- **Flowchart**

**Percentage of transgender youth**

- 35.1% live in states that ban access to gender-affirming care
- 1.6% live in states that ban access to gender-affirming care

**Equality in Legislature**

- **Flowchart**
- **Flowchart**

**Percentage of anti-identity healthcare bills introduced in state legislature were passed**

- 2023: 26.4%
- 2024: 18.9%

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**Parent Response**

**The binaries that we live with are delusions and social constructs. Queer joy is amazing.**

**Daniel Bogard**

**Parent**